



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Superintendents

**FROM:** Teresa Brown, Assistant Superintendent  
Outreach the School Improvement Division

**DATE:** January 27, 2014

**SUBJECT:** Ensuring Leadership for Priority Schools

On December 9, 17, 19, the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) conducted regional information sessions for school and district leaders to outline state and federal requirements for focus and priority schools. This memo discusses updated information concerning federal requirements for ensuring strong leadership in priority schools.

### **FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS**

Indiana's Elementary and Secondary Education Act Flexibility Waiver (ESEA Waiver) requires particular action of focus schools and priority schools. A focus school is a school receiving a D letter grade for one year. A priority school is a school receiving an F letter grade for one year or a combination of two D's or D and F for two consecutive years.

**Turnaround Principle One** requires superintendents to ensure priority schools have strong leadership by: (1) reviewing the performance of the current principal; (2) either replacing the principal if such a change is necessary to ensure strong and effective leadership, or demonstrating to the IDOE that the current principal has a track record in improving achievement and has the ability to lead the turnaround effort; and (3) providing the principal with operational flexibility in the areas of scheduling, staff, curriculum, and budget.

Attached to this memo, you will find the specific forms and process for ensuring strong leadership. **It is important to note the deadline for the process has been changed to February 28, 2014.** The US Department of Education requires that our IDOE process includes a thorough review and response to the documentation and evidence provided by local districts. To provide an opportunity for the review, response, and

appeal process, it is necessary to change the deadline from the April 1, 2014 deadline communicated previously. The IDOE will respond to the ensuring leadership review by April 15, 2014 and notify districts of the “ensuring leadership determination.” We understand it is critical for local districts to have leadership in place as soon as possible for the 2014-15 school year.

The ESEA Waiver and the US Department of Education are both clear and specific in the expectations for schools labeled as priority schools. Priority schools must use data to determine the scope of their improvement work, align interventions to turnaround principles, and make intentional decisions about leadership and staff of the priority school. The attached documents will assist district leaders as they move forward with ensuring strong leadership in Indiana’s priority schools.

We look forward to providing assistance to Indiana schools as we implement statutory and ESEA Waiver requirements for our focus and priority schools. If you have additional questions, you may contact me at [tabrown@doe.in.gov](mailto:tabrown@doe.in.gov) or 317-232-0524.